There is a lot of talk these days about the “Farm Bill,” which is currently being debated in Washington, DC. The truth is that much of the discussion and the delay has nothing to do with farms.

More than two-thirds of the bill is actually made up of nutrition programs: school lunch assistance, the SNAP program, formerly known as Food Stamps, and others.

Because these programs are so costly and so political, they are hindering progress of a new bill before the current one expires at the end of September.

It wasn’t always this way. The first Farm Bill was passed in 1933 and was focused on dealing with farm issues following the Dust Bowl. One of the key issues was the rock bottom prices (corn prices actually hit $0).Other areas addressed in that first Farm Bill were national hunger, soil erosion, lack of credit and unfair export prices.

Since those days, there have been 15 Farm Bills—a new one about every five years—and programs have been added. The entire process has been diluted from the original intent which was to preserve and protect our nation’s agricultural interests to ensure we maintain this vital industry and our nation’s food supply. If farmers go out of business, we either starve or are forced to import food like we do with oil.

The commodities portion of the Farm Bill—covering actual farm assistance—is only 12 percent of the total cost of the Farm Bill. These protections for the agricultural industry are put in place to ensure we can continue to grow the food, fiber and fuel we need for our country and to export around the globe.

The federal assistance on crop insurance isn’t a handout. Farmers still have to purchase their own insurance. By subsidizing some of the cost, the government is making it possible for farmers to be able to purchase insurance and ride out the natural disasters that can plague the industry that feeds us.

Both the House and the Senate Agriculture Committees have approved their own versions of the bill. The Senate has also approved their version. And, through bipartisan work, both versions of the bill offer the first real deficit reduction proposed by any bill in this Congress. Agriculture has been the only group willing to step up to take our fair share of the cuts to help reduce our national debt.

Talks are stalled right now. Elections often create stalls. But this issue goes beyond politics and is about ensuring our nation’s food supply and protecting one of the few sectors of our nation’s economy, which actually produced jobs and economic growth during these recent dark recession years.

Please urge your representative and senator to get the Farm Bill passed now. We need it for everyone’s sake.

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